IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows.

For the Examiner's convenience, a list of all claims is included below.

1-6   (Canceled)

7.   (Currently amended) Apparatus for formation of a composite video image, the apparatus comprising:

a shadow control module that receives a foreground video image signal and generates a shadow key that identifies at least one selected pixel for which foreground shadowing is activated;

a shadow generation module that receives the foreground image signal and the shadow key and generates and issues a foreground shadow signal FGSh, in which each selected pixel appears in a shadow format; and

a shadowing module that receives the foreground shadow signal and a background video image signal BG and generates a modified background image signal, in which a foreground shadow is impressed on each selected pixel of the background image, wherein said shadowing module forms a sum signal β FGSh + (1- β') BG, as said modified background image signal, where β and β' are real numbers lying in a range [0,1], selected so as to limit either an intensity of the foreground shadow or an intensity of the background image.

8.   (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 7, wherein said shadowing module forms a sum signal β FGSh + (1 β') BG, as said modified background

image signal, where β and β' are real numbers lying in a range [0,1] β is less than β' thereby limiting the intensity of the background image.

9.   (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 8, wherein said selected numbers β and β' are chosen to be equal β is greater than β' thereby limiting the intensity of the foreground shadow.

10-19   (Canceled)

20.   (Currently amended) A method for formation of a composite video image, the method comprising:

receiving a foreground video image signal and generating a shadow key that identifies at least one selected pixel for which foreground shadowing is activated;

receiving the foreground image signal and the shadow key and generating and issuing a foreground shadow signal, FGSh, in which each selected pixel appears in a shadow format; and

receiving the foreground shadow signal and a background video image signal and generating a modified background image signal, MBG, in which a foreground shadow is impressed on each selected pixel of the background image by forming a sum signal, β FGSh + (1- β') BG, as a modified background image signal, where β and β' are real numbers lying in a range [0,1], selected so as to limit either an intensity of the foreground shadow or an intensity of the background image.

21.　　(Currently amended) The method of claim 20, wherein ~~said process of generating said modified background image signal comprises forming a sum signal β FGSh + (1- β') BG, where β and β' are selected real numbers lying in a range [0,1]~~ β is less than β' thereby limiting the intensity of the background image.

22.　　(Currently amended) The method of claim 21, ~~further comprising choosing said selected numbers β and β; to be equal~~ wherein β is greater than β' thereby limiting the intensity of the foreground shadow signal.

23-30　(Canceled)

31.　　(Currently amended) An article of manufacture comprising:

　　　　a computer usable medium having computer readable code means embodied therein for producing a composite video image including portions of at least one foreground image and of at least one background image;

　　　　computer readable program code means for receiving a foreground video image signal FG and generates a shadow key that identifies at least one selected pixel for which foreground shadowing is activated;

　　　　computer readable program code means for receiving the foreground image signal and the shadow key and generating and issues a foreground shadow signal FGSh, in which each selected pixel appears in a shadow format; and

　　　　computer readable program code means for receiving the foreground shadow signal and a background video image signal BG and generating a modified background image signal, in which a foreground shadow is impressed on each

selected pixel of the background image <u>by forming a sum signal β FGSh + (1-β') BG as said modified background image signal, where β and β' are selected real numbers lying in a range [0;1], selected so as to limit either an intensity of the foreground shadow or an intensity of the background image</u>.

32.   (Currently amended) The article of claim 31, ~~further comprising computer readable program code means for forming a sum signal β FGSh + (1 β') BG as said modified background image signal, where β and β' are selected real numbers lying in a range [0,1]~~ β is less than β' thereby limiting the intensity of the background image signal .